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MAKE PORTO RICANS CITIZENS

(Continued from Page Nine)

Remarks by Morse.

Mr. Morse of Wisconsin—Mr. Speaker, in the three minutes which have been granted me it will not be possible to make any argument affecting the merits of the bill. I will content myself, however, with calling the attention of the House to the fact that this is one of the first bills to come from the committee on Insular Affairs. There are a large number of very important bills there, one or two of which have been reported out and are now on the calendar of the House. I think the attention of the membership of the House ought to be called to these matters on account of the great importance which attaches to them. I believe with the gentleman from Illinois that we are very shortly to be brought face to face with the problem of the disposition not only of Porto Rico, not only of the Philippine Islands, but with other territory as well, and I realize that we might just as well commence to prepare ourselves to face those problems at this time. I certainly believe that we should grant to these people at this time American citizenship. They are citizens only of Porto Rico, a most anomalous position.

They were formerly citizens of Spain. They are not recognized as citizens of any country, and it seems to me that their political status ought to be fixed. We have taken this territory. They have consented to become a part of this country, and it seems to me that they are entitled not only to the protection, but to all the rights of American citizens. They are a loyal people. They are a people that have given us no trouble and no expense. The community under our laws is extremely prosperous. We have there instituted our system of public schools. The proportion of negro blood is not much larger, if it is any larger, in Porto Rico than it is in the great State of South Carolina. And I believe that while the quality of citizenship is not as high as it ought to be, yet they should be given the privilege of American citizenship at this time.

Evidence of Civilization.

Mr. Cooper of Wisconsin—Mr. Speaker, the Republican platform of 1908 declared for citizenship for Porto Rico. [Applause.] Why do gentle-

men on this floor who claim to be Republicans repudiate that plank of the national platform? The gentleman from Texas [Mr. Slayden], who has just addressed the House, says that the Porto Ricans can give the world no contribution to civilization. They were so civilized, I inform the gentleman, that more than a half century ago they voluntarily enfranchised all of the slaves in the island and paid their owners \$20,000,000, raised by taxing themselves. [Applause.] What people has ever done anything nobler than that?

There is another and a controlling reason why the Porto Ricans should be made citizens of the United States. Under the constitution we have no right to hold any people in subjection to our laws forever unless they are citizens. And we are going to hold Porto Rico forever. Why? Because we are never going to give up the Panama Canal, and therefore the geography of the situation makes it absolutely essential that we insist upon the permanent retention by the United States of the island of Porto Rico. We shall not let it go to any foreign power.

It is a compact island, about 90 miles by 40, whose inhabitants are so intelligent and so civilized that the monarchy of Spain permitted them to send representatives to each of the two branches of the Spanish Cortes.

Mr. Slayden—May I ask the gentleman whether all the people of the island were entitled to the franchise?

Mr. Cooper—No; not all; but franchise and citizenship are entirely separate things.

The question we are now considering relates to Porto Rico. As to the retention of the Philippine Islands, that is another question not now before us.

Should Keep Promises.

Mr. Helm of Kentucky—Mr. Speaker, I believe that a party, like an individual, must keep its promises. The individual who makes promises and breaks them is a man who can not be depended upon. A party that goes before the people and makes certain pledges and promises to the effect that if it is intrusted with power it will do certain things and then fails to carry those pledges and promises into execution can not long remain in power. [Applause on the Democratic side.]

The Democratic party has pledged citizenship to the Porto Ricans, and it behooves the Democrats to make that promise good. To my mind this is an important act. Instead of standing here in this House and reproaching our neighbors to the south of us, we should make friends of them. We should cultivate the kindest relation-

ship with them.

This little island of Porto Rico has sent here as its representatives men who will compare quite favorably with any man in this House. If they are treated fairly, and if we as Americans extend to them the blessings of citizenship, you will with this little island create an object lesson in the south sea islands that will win for this government the everlasting gratitude, respect, and love of not only the people of Porto Rico, but also of the other islanders who should be our natural allies. [Applause.] It is in that zone that our trade can be developed and expanded. We should cultivate good relations with them instead of fomenting discord, as I am a little slow to charge it to be true in the case of Mexico. But the disturbances that are going on in Mexico, I am afraid, find their origin back in the United States, and I am sorry if that is true. [Applause on the Democratic side.]

Jones is Surprised.

Mr. Jones (concluding)—Mr. Speaker, I am very much surprised that opposition to this measure should have come from two such distinguished gentlemen as the ex-Speaker of this House [Mr. Cannon] and the leader of the Republican side of the House [Mr. Mann].

Mr. Mann—Why does the gentleman say that? I did not say anything that was opposed to the measure. I pointed out some sections of the measure that apparently have never received the careful consideration of the gentleman, but I said I was not opposed to the measure.

Mr. Jones—I beg the gentleman's pardon. I drew the conclusion—and I think naturally—from the criticisms indulged in by the gentleman that he was opposed to it. I am glad to know that he is not opposed to it.

Mr. Mann—I beg the gentleman's pardon. I did not make any criticisms of the bill at all.

Mr. Jones—Well, I did not mean to be understood as saying, Mr. Speaker, that the gentleman criticized the form of the bill. The gentleman criticized the principle embodied in the bill.

Mr. Mann—I beg the gentleman's pardon. I did nothing of the sort.

Mr. Jones—I mean to say—

Mr. Mann—I decline to have that statement go unchallenged.

Mr. Jones—The gentleman contended that the people of Porto Rico would have more reason to ask for statehood if this bill were passed than they now have to ask for citizenship.

Mr. Mann—Is that a criticism of the bill?

Mr. Jones—That is a criticism, or,

at least, I so understood it. I understood that the gentleman was opposed to the bill for the reason that if American citizenship was conferred upon the people of Porto Rico they would then ask for statehood, to which he was opposed. I am very glad to know that the gentleman does not oppose the bill.

I am very much surprised that the distinguished ex-Speaker of this House should oppose this bill.

If I remember aright the gentleman was a member of the last National Republican Convention; that he was a most influential member of a national convention of his party which unanimously declared it to be the purpose of the Republican party to give collective citizenship to the people of Porto Rico. [Applause.] This bill is an honest expression of the purpose of the majority in this House to carry out the pledge contained in the Democratic platform to give the people of Porto Rico American citizenship. Both of the great political parties have declared themselves in favor of granting American citizenship to the people of Porto Rico, and, as I have said, the present Secretary of War in his last annual report strongly urged that this be done. I read from his report:

"I think the time is arriving if it has not already arrived, when it is the part of honest and far-sighted statesmanship frankly to declare our position as to the ultimate interrelation between the United States and Porto Rico, so far as it is possible to do so without unduly hampering the future in wisely dealing with this problem."

Then the Secretary proceeds to say in regard to the desire of the Porto Ricans for citizenship:

"I believe the demand is just; that it is amply earned by sustained loyalty; and that it should be granted."

Mr. Speaker, the gentleman from Illinois [Mr. Mann] did say, and I think he will not question this statement, that he seriously doubted the correctness of the legal proposition which I laid down—that the people of Porto Rico were already citizens of the United States.

Mr. Mann—I have no doubt of it at all.

Mr. Jones—Although he questioned the correctness of that proposition, he did not discuss it. He did not undertake to point out why section 1891 of the Revised Statutes did not make the Porto Ricans citizens of the United States. The present attorney general of Porto Rico, who has given great thought and study to this subject, appeared before the Insular Affairs Committee and declared it to be his opinion

that the people of Porto Rico were now citizens of the United States. Mr. Cannon—Will the gentleman yield for a question?

Mr. Jones—Certainly.

Mr. Cannon—If that be true, what is the necessity for this legislation? Mr. Jones—The necessity for this legislation arises from the fact, as this report states, and as I have already stated, that the authorities in this country and in Porto Rico have not placed the interpretation upon section 1891 which has been placed upon it by the attorney general of Porto Rico and many other learned and eminent lawyers. Porto Rico, for some reason inexplicable to me, is not held to be an organized Territory within the meaning of section 1891 of the Revised Statutes of the United States.

The Speaker—The time of the gentleman has expired. All time has expired. The question is on suspending the rules and passing the bill.

The question was taken; and two-thirds having voted in the affirmative, the rules were suspended, and the bill was passed.

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